

# Fulfilling the Vision: Othello (MLK @ Holly Street) Neighborhood Plan Update Draft Goals and Strategies

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## Vision: Excerpt from the MLK at Holly Street Neighborhood Plan, July 1998

*"We the Residents, Merchants, and Friends of the MLK at Holly Street Neighborhood pledge to build and maintain a healthy, safe, and sustainable community. Through our diversity, strength, and cooperation, we will realize our full potential as a thriving social, educational, and business community. We visualize:*

- *The successful integration of open space with residential and commercial development.*
- *Partnerships to encourage the location of retail and service outlets within the community.*
- *A neighborhood that provides education and social resources for youth and adults.*
- *Mixed use housing with opportunities for affordable private ownership.*
- *A coalition of merchants and residents who actively promote a safe and secure environment.*
- *An accessible transit system that will adequately serve a diverse, growing community"*

## Shaping a Transit Oriented Town Center

This section of the update describes goals of community members to preserve the diversity of residents and merchants in the neighborhood while strengthening the core town center around the light rail station. It also outlines strategies and action to help achieve these goals.

Othello neighbors recognize with the opening of Link Light Rail that there is an opportunity to market the unique character of their community and to make it known that Othello is the place to go for international goods and services.

## Draft Goals & Strategies

**Goal: Create a uniquely identifiable town center**

### Discussion

Othello has a growing identification as a community, due to New Holly, and as a destination for international food and cultural experiences; both of which are more readily accessible now with the arrival of light rail service.

### Draft Strategies

- A. Officially rename the neighborhood from MLK at Holly Street to Othello.
- B. Create a civic space in the town center and accentuate the connections to high quality open spaces including Othello Playground, John C. Little Jr. Park, Chief Sealth Trail, Van Asselt Park and Community Center, and the pocket parks and open spaces within New Holly.
- C. Complete an urban design framework plan that examines creating a pedestrian-oriented commercial, or market street, along the 38<sup>th</sup> and/or 39<sup>th</sup> Ave S corridor between S. Myrtle and S. Othello Streets. (Note: If along 38<sup>th</sup> Ave. S, consider impacts to new transit service that will use 38<sup>th</sup> Ave S.)
- D. Review and update the neighborhood design guidelines.

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E. Encourage the presence and expansion of the multi-cultural business district.

**Goal: Create a town center reflective of those who live, work and shop in the neighborhood – representing a range of daily needed goods.**

### Discussion

The community is the most ethnically diverse in the city and the existing businesses represent that diversity. Community members expressed a desire to better communicate to the neighborhood the great resource of having such a variety of small businesses in the town center. There was a strong desire expressed to keep a grocery store in the town center, and to ensure that commercial rents are kept affordable so as not to price out the small and immigrant owned businesses that are a defining characteristic of the community. Many community members recognized that more people moving into the neighborhood could result in more customers for the small and immigrant owned businesses in the town center

### Draft Strategies

- A. Improve the range of goods and services to meet the needs of the diverse community
- B. Strengthen the MLK Business Association and the African Business Association so that the business owners can work together to foster and support a vibrant neighborhood business district that serves the community. The business associations can also provide a venue for its members to raise its concerns to the City as well as pursue grants and technical assistance.
- C. Support the continued presence of a grocery store.
- D. Support existing small businesses and encourage new small business development in the following ways:
  - Provide technical assistance, including access to financing to small businesses through the City Office of Economic Development.
  - Provide access to financing for small businesses in retail corridor.
  - Encourage membership in local business associations.
  - Encourage peer support and mentoring.
  - Explore long term affordable commercial space strategies.
  - Promote the location of cultural community centers and services in the neighborhood.
  - Promote opportunities for cross-cultural meetings amongst the business owners as well as among the broader community.
  - Explore new and existing models of financing mixed-use development projects that provide affordable commercial space as well as affordable housing in City-funded mixed use projects.
- E. Consider zoning changes to accommodate the expansion of the Filipino Community Center.
- F. Modify station area overlay zoning to retain or add affordable commercial space. Potential Partners include:
  - SCORE/Small Business Dev. Center
  - UW Entrepreneurial Law Clinic
  - Rainier Valley Community Development Fund
  - HomeSight

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- G. Improve the existing town center and make it more inviting using the City's Neighborhood Business District Fund and Neighborhood Street Funds. Work with the community to identify projects and initiatives in which the community's effort would be matched by funds from the Neighborhood Matching Fund.

Improvements may include:

- Streetscape amenities, such as benches and banners
- Activating public spaces with vendors
- Business district marketing map and brochure
- Establishing its identity as the place to go for international shopping

- H. Complete the sidewalk network to make better connections between destinations.

- I. Focus pedestrian-oriented retail on side streets and those parallel to MLK.

**Goal: Create a civic gathering space appropriate and flexible for the diversity of cultures living in the neighborhood**

### Discussion

Many community members expressed a desire for a gathering place that could accommodate specific cultural and interest groups. Given the diversity of cultures and ethnicities represented in the neighborhood, a common and flexible gathering place that can accommodate a variety of gatherings and activities is desirable and more achievable than a multitude of separate venues.

### Draft Strategies

- A. Prioritize the acquisition of land for future development of a multicultural gathering space.
- B. Develop design and development guidelines for a multicultural gathering venue.

**Goal: Improve connections to light rail and bus, focusing on streets running east to west**

### Discussion

In order for the light rail service to better serve the community, community members expressed a strong desire for access to the station to be improved, specifically to and from the east and west.

### Draft Strategies

- A. Implement Southeast Transportation Study (SETS) which serves as the blueprint for programming transportation improvements in Southeast Seattle.:
- Project #8: Improve safety at the intersection of S. Othello Street and 43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue S.
  - Project #9: Improve safety at intersections of Renton Ave S and 43<sup>rd</sup> Ave S and S Holden St /43<sup>rd</sup> Avenue S / S Renton Ave and create a safe pedestrian/bicycle route to the light rail station.
- B. Use the Pedestrian Master Plan as a tool for prioritizing pedestrian improvements.
- C. Use the Bicycle Master Plan as a tool for prioritizing bicycle improvements.
- D. Work with King County Metro to retain bus connections along MLK between light rail stations.
- E. Enhance safety of pedestrian light rail crossings and connections to businesses.

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- F. Through a mixture of private and public investments, enhance pedestrian lighting and widen sidewalks along S Myrtle and S Othello streets.

### Creating Choices for Living, Working and Recreating

This section of the update describes goals of community members to preserve, enhance and in some cases improve the day to day life of residents and merchants in the Othello community. It also outlines strategies and actions to help achieve these goals.

The Othello community values the diversity of culture reflected in its neighbors and businesses, and the diversity of ages, having one of the highest percentages of children in Seattle. Community assets such as the Filipino Community Center and the Lao Highland Association, as well as the redevelopment of New Holly, also distinguish the Othello neighborhood. The community has long recognized and valued the multi-cultural commercial district at Othello.

### Draft Goals & Strategies

#### Goal: Create a safe environment for people and business

##### Discussion

Public safety has been a concern of Othello residents for years. There are concerns both about potential violence, as well as walking and driving along the streets and around the new light rail line.

##### Draft Strategies:

- A. Use Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles to help create a more secure environment for people to walk and gather.
- B. Enhance pedestrian lighting on all streets in multifamily and mixed use areas.
- C. Enhance pedestrian lighting on walkways through parks, especially the Chief Sealth trail.
- D. Use the Pedestrian Master Plan as a tool for prioritizing pedestrian improvements and Neighborhood Street Fund projects to improve walkability through sidewalk repair and widening.
- E. Enliven temporarily vacant sites with local artwork or other activities.
- F. Activate public spaces with vendors.
- G. Encourage more pedestrian traffic and “eyes on the street” in both the commercial and residential portions of new developments by encouraging dense development in the town center.
- H. Explore the formation of a Business Improvement Area (BIA).
- I. Establish a cross-cultural training program to educate police officers on the various cultures and develop protocol and awareness necessary when assisting members of Othello’s diverse community. Educate the various cultural groups on police procedures, duties, etc.

#### Goal: Encourage a range of housing types and affordability, including family size homes

##### Discussion

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Community members expressed a desire to maintain as well as augment existing affordable housing in the neighborhood, some expressing concern that affordable housing options would disappear with new development. The importance of a range of housing prices and sizes, especially for larger families, as well as housing both for rent and for sale was noted. Community members acknowledged the strong potential for light rail to bring renewed development interest in the Othello neighborhood. Along with the benefits of new neighbors, some expressed the concern about the potential reduction in housing affordability, specifically around the light rail station.

### Draft Strategies

- A. Encourage and require a mix of home prices and sizes through the active use of incentive, direct City funding, and surplus property programs.
- B. Encourage affordable family sized homes through incentive, direct City funding, and surplus property programs.
- C. Leverage public funds to support affordable housing adjacent to light rail station.
- D. Use City funding to leverage other funding to preserve existing and create new subsidized housing throughout the Urban Village.
- E. Apply Comprehensive Plan affordable housing targets to the Othello Urban Village and periodically evaluate progress---set affordable housing objectives and use incentive, direct City funding, and surplus property programs to fill gaps.
- F. Achieve a balance of affordable rental and homeownership housing through incentive, direct funding, and surplus property programs.
- G. Within mixed use zones in the Station Area Overlay District, consider minimum residential densities (related to the zoning designations) which must be built in new buildings in order to create the critical mass of people and activity for a town center, and appropriate amounts of parking in transit-oriented development.
- H. Support low-income, senior and disabled homeowners through the City's Homewise Home Repair and Weatherization programs as well as through the County's property tax exemption program.

**Goal: Support the growth of family wage jobs and jobs for teenagers in the neighborhood for young teens as well as those that provide a living wage.**

### Discussion

A number of community members expressed their desire to have access to jobs and job training within or near to their community. Job opportunities and apprentice programs specifically for teens were suggested as means to provide neighborhood youth with positive activity options.

### Draft Strategies:

- A. Consider site locations that are appropriate for green business opportunities.
- B. Work with the Rainier Valley Chamber of Commerce, the MLK Business Association and the African Business Association to expand employment opportunities for area residents.
- C. Continue to provide positive and safe activities for youth offered through the Office of Arts and Cultural Affairs programs such as the School of Acrobatics & New Circus Arts offering

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- youth a year-long series of theatrical workshops and coaching by artists skilled in a variety of circus disciplines.
- D. Promote and develop programs through the Office of Education and the Human Services Department.
  - E. Support the Student-Teen Employment Preparation (STEP) program designed to provide youth with education, job skills and career development training.
  - F. Support the Seattle Youth Employment Program, a year-round academic support and job training program for youth ages 14-21 that helps youth graduate from high school, move on to college or trade school, and develop job skills.
  - G. Promote job training through the Seattle Vocational Institute.
  - H. Encourage local hiring by local institutions and community organizations.
- Potential Partners include:
- Rainier Valley Chamber of Commerce
  - MLK Business Association
  - African Business Association
  - SEED
  - The School of Acrobatics & New Circus Arts

**Goal: Support access to educational and employment training opportunities for all ages.**

### Discussion

Many neighbors lamented the closure of public schools in Southeast as well as the perceived inadequate amount of ESL classes offered in the neighborhood. Community members recognize the importance of additional support to immigrant and refugee families in order to maintain the cultural diversity that the neighborhood values.

### Draft Strategies:

- A. Work with South Seattle Community College to expand job training programs at New Holly Learning Center, a community resource for southeast Seattle. This center offers an array of programs and courses for English speaking and non-English speaking adults and youth seeking to improve their literacy and employability skills in order to transition to college or entry-level employment. The South Seattle Community College New Holly Learning Center provides ESL and Family Literacy Programs, Placement Testing, ABE/GED preparation, and limited worker retraining.
- B. Improve transit connections to educational opportunities and training programs at South and Central Seattle Community Colleges.

**Goal: Ensure that new and existing open space is culturally relevant to the diversity of residents**

### Discussion

Many community members indicated the diversity of the neighborhood as one of the most important characteristics of the neighborhood. In continued support of this diversity, it was suggested that parks and open space be designed and programmed to accommodate users of diverse ages, interests and cultures, and to allow for informal interactions of people from different cultures.

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### Draft Strategies

- A. Increase Seattle Parks and Recreation programming of parks for recreational and cultural activities that are relevant to the diverse population at John C. Little Sr. Park and Othello Playground. Hire multi-lingual Parks program staff.
- B. Improve non-motorized connections to open spaces with lighting and benches.
- C. Create a new civic (open) space in the town center that can be programmed for a variety of community functions including farmers markets and cultural celebrations.
- D. Pursue the addition of a water feature at Othello Playground that is attractive to a diversity of ages.